



UNIVERSITÀ
di VERONA
Dipartimento
di LINGUE
E LETTERATURE STRANIERE



Graduate Conference
Ph.D. Programme in Foreign Languages and Literatures
University of Verona
December 2-3, 2026

(De)Constructing Identities: Inclusive practices of naming

In close connection with the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures Project of Excellence in Inclusive Humanities, the 2026 Graduate Conference “(De)Constructing Identities: Inclusive practices of naming” aims at encouraging critical reflections around the linguistic and literary processes through which identities are shaped, negotiated, but also twisted and contested.

Twentieth-century theories, including poststructuralism, feminist studies, and the postcolonial approach, have differently challenged essentialist views of identity, while contemporary critical debates increasingly highlight politics of naming, language, and representation, showcasing how identities are constructed through discourse, translation, and performative acts.

As Dorothy Dodge Robbins has argued, literary onomastics “does not simply meld literary studies with onomastics concerns [but] is [also] often informed by theories and methods associated with other disciplines” (2023, 1) and in that contends that names play a crucial role in literary works. This aspect gains further significance when works of literature are approached through specific research lenses. Queer and Gender Studies, for instance, have framed language as a means to enact change, reclaim identities, and undermine stereotypes constructed through social practices (Rand 2014; Butler 1990). Postcolonial Studies have similarly devoted significant attention to the stereotypical framing of colonised people through Westernised labels such as “subaltern” and “Other” (Said 1978; Spivak 1988), questioning how oppressed groups have either appropriated or rejected the imposition of analogous categories (Bird 1999). In recent years, Disability Studies have also illuminated the problematic adoption of ableist naming practices in both socio-cultural and literary contexts that significantly escape academic boundaries (Zola 1993; Davis 1997). The study of identity gains further depth when all these layers are approached intersectionally (Crenshaw 1991).

The theme of naming has also been associated with politics and cultural memory. In Cultural Memory Studies, names define the processes through which memory is mediated (Erll and Nünning 2008), while challenging the limits of the canon (Espino 1999); in addition to that, critical discourses on naming and identity have been approached through distant reading methodologies (Moretti 2013, Underwood 2019). Moreover, onomastics constitutes a traditional field of philological research, in which the study of anthroponyms can shed light on the origins and development of specific linguistic, social, and cultural phenomena (Gueienich and Runde 2006).

Foreign Languages, Linguistics and Translation Studies, on the other hand, have extensively explored naming from interdisciplinary perspectives (Petit, Haillet, and Salvador 2017), focusing, in particular, on selective politics, namely the choices that lead individuals to name the so-called “Other” (Delphy 2008) according to social and contextual realities. In this sense, naming acquires specific political meaning as a tool capable of shaping our world perception. Indeed, naming does not simply relate to proper names as a linguistic category (Motschenbacher 2020); rather, it represents an essential concept in terms of linguistic rights. This phenomenon applies particularly to people belonging to minority groups who have either acquired the right to keep their names (Troilo 2017) or have been denied that choice through economic or cultural appropriation (Soto 2025). Feminist linguistics has fostered reflections on naming practices, especially in the light of gender and inclusion (Abbou 2022), but also with regard to translation, whose practice implies in fact additional layers of complexity that deserve to be adequately addressed (von Flotow and Kamal 2020). In political discourse, names are instruments of power dynamics through which trends become recognisable (Urbatsch 2026). At the same time, naming may contribute to stereotyping, stigmatisation and the legitimisation of discriminating practices (Goffman 2005).

With reference to names, naming, and name-using practices, suggested topics of interests include, but are not limited to, the following domains:

Foreign Languages, Linguistics, and Translation:

- Multilingualism and policies of naming in public institutions;
- Sociolinguistic approaches to minority languages;
- Inclusive strategies in gender-related discourse;
- The challenges and solutions of translating inclusivity;
- Accessibility in specialised language texts;
- Critical Discourse Analysis and inclusion;
- Inclusion in foreign language teaching;
- Sign Language;
- Historical onomastics.

Literatures and Cultures:

- Hybrid narrative forms and voices outside of the canon;
- The value of naming in postcolonial and migration texts;
- Labelling and ‘otherisation’ in Gender and Queer Studies;
- The problem of identity in intermedial and transmedial adaptations;
- The layered inclusive possibilities of disability narratives;
- Issues of contextual absence in distant reading;
- Representing names and identities through encoding languages;
- Problematizing personhood in literary translation;
- Approaches to individuality in translingual and trans-cultural perspectives;
- Naming phenomena in premodern literatures and cultures.

Keynote Speakers

Prof. Dr. Julie Abbou, University of Turin
Prof. Donatella Bremer, University of Pisa

Submission Guidelines

We accept proposals in either English or Italian from PhD students, candidates, and early-career researchers (within two years of receiving their doctorate). Final contributions should be designed for a **20-minute** presentation.

Please submit an abstract in pdf format of up to 250 words alongside essential bibliographical details and a brief biographical note (maximum 100 words) to: dottorato.lls@ateneo.univr.it

Deadline for submission: June 1, 2026

Notification of acceptance will be sent by: June 20, 2026

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